

AS-Sadat Speech to Assembly

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[Speech by President Anwar as-Sadat to the People's Assembly--live]

[Text] In the name of God, brothers and sisters, I would have liked to have come to you before today so as to meet with you and with the masses of our people and nation, but I was preoccupied with what you know about and what you want. I am confident that you will understand and excuse.

However, I felt your presence and that of our people and nation with me in every opinion. I felt your presence and that of our people and nation with me in every decision. You were all with me in the matters that I have shouldered as an expression of the will of the nation and of the destiny of a people.

I then found it suitable to come to you today so as to speak to you and to the masses of our people and the peoples of our nation as well as before a world that is interested in what is happening in our land because it is closely related to humanity's gravest issue. the issue of war and peace. -- This is because we do not consider our patriotic [watani] and national [qawmi] struggle as a local or regional phenomenon because the area in which we live has its strategic and cultural role in the heart of the world and the center of its movement.

And because the events are important and the developments were successive and the decisions were decisions of destiny, I would like to begin directly with what I would like to talk to you about. I will concentrate on two points: War and peace.

First, war. I do not think you expect me to stand in front of you so that we together boast about what we have achieved in 11 days of the most important and gravest--in fact greatest and most glorious--days in our history. [applause]

The day may come when we will sit together not to boast but to remember and to study and also to teach our children and grandchildren, generation after generation, the story of hardships of struggle, the bitterness and sufferings of defeat and the sweetness and hopes of victory. [applause]

Yes, the day will come when we will sit to relate what everyone of us has done in his own position and how everyone of us shouldered his trust and carried out his role. We will relate how the heroes of this people and this nation came out in pitch black days to carry the torches to lighten the path so their nation can cross the bridge between despair and hope. The time will come for all that.

I think you will agree with me that we have problems and tasks to which we must devote all our time and efforts. If I may digress a little--although I know that you are craving to hear more--let me say the following:

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1. Regarding myself, I have tried to fulfill the pledges I made to God and to you exactly 3 years ago today. I pledged to God and to you that the question of liberating the patriotic and national soil was the first responsibility I assumed in loyalty to our people and to everyone. I pledged to God and to you that I would spare no efforts or sacrifices, regardless of their costs to me, for the sake of enabling the nation to reach a situation where it can raise its will to the level of its aspirations. For I have always believed and still do that a wish that is not backed by will is like daydreaming. My love for and loyalty to this homeland refused to fall prey to the mirage or fog of daydreaming.

I have pledged to God and to you that we will confirm to the world that the 1967 setback was historically and not fundamentally an exception. I said this out of my belief in the 7,000 years of civilization, seeking horizons that I am fully confident the struggle of our people and nation will attain and will establish their existence and realize their great dreams.

I have pledged to God and to you that our generation will not hand over their flags to the next generation at half mast or in a state of humiliation. But we will hand over our flags flying high and in a glorious state. They may be stained with blood but we have held our heads up high, although our country was bleeding and in a bitter and painful state. [prolonged applause]

I have pledged to God and to you that I would not miss an appropriate moment. I would not take risks or hesitate. The calculations were hard and the responsibility was grave. However, I realized, as I have repeatedly told you and the nation that this was my destiny, which I have taken upon myself. I pledge to God and to you [the foregoing], and I sincerely attempted to fulfill the pledge, seeking God's help and asking your confidence and that of the nation. I thank God.

2. Everything was dependent on the will of the nation, the magnitude and depth of this will. We could not and nobody could have done anything had it not been for the people and the nation. The night was long and heavy. However, the nation has never lost its faith that the dawn would break.

I say without pretense that history shall record for this nation that its setback was not a downfall but a passing tumble and that its movement was not an outburst but a lofty rise. Our people have exerted unlimited efforts, made unlimited sacrifices and showed unlimited maturity. More important than all that--the efforts, sacrifices and maturity--the people maintained unlimited faith. This was the dividing line between the setback and failure.

I have felt that from the first day I assumed responsibility and willingly accepted the burdens God placed on my shoulders, I knew that the people's faith was the foundation. If the foundations were sound, then we could retrieve everything that we lost and once again return to the place we retreated from. Despite many manifestations, some of which were natural and others fabricated owing to the psychological warfare waged against us, the question facing me and others every passing day was: Is the foundation sound? I was confident that no psychological warfare no matter how fierce could affect the firmness of this foundation. As long as the foundation was all right, then everything should be all right. The rest was nothing but a tempest in a teacup, as they say.

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I (I admit) we faced many real problems, problems in the services, supply, production and also in political work. I knew the truth, but I was not in a position to explain it. I knew that we had to make life bearable for the people and at the same time take precautions for what was expected. I was certain that the day would come when the truth would be known to others as it was clear to me. When the truth is known, the people will know and appreciate. I thank God.

3. There were clear indications that the entire Arab nation was in a state of rupture. I thought this was natural because of social and cultural reasons that were aggravated by the bitterness of the setback. Some asked me and asked themselves as well: Will the nation be able to face its terrible trial while in this state of rupture?

I used to say: In addition to its natural causes, this rupture reflects the contrast between reality and hope. There is no advantage in this. I even believed that there was no cure or rest from what the nation's conscience was suffering from except when the nation would face the moment of challenge. At certain times I was not prepared to enter into futile discussions: Should we deal with the rupture before facing the challenge or accept the challenge despite the presence of indications of rupture? My opinion has been that nations can discover themselves or their mettle only through engaging in struggle. The greater the challenge the greater will be the awakening of the nation and its discovery of its capabilities.

I do not deny the existence of social and cultural differences, for this is the course of history. But at the same time, I realize that great nations, when faced with great challenges, are capable of clearly determining the priorities for themselves in a way that leaves no room for doubt. I have believed in the soundness and firmness of the call of Arab nationalism. I have been aware of the various interactions that motivate the progress of the one nation. But I have also been confident that the unity of action will impose itself on all the powers, quarters and currents because they will all realize that the present condition is not one for competition between various interpretations but one of struggle involving the life or death of an entire nation. Thank God.

4. I have been aware of the quality of our Armed Forces. [applause] When I spoke about them I was not predicting the future or speculating. I have come up from the ranks of these Armed Forces and personally lived according to their traditions. I had the honor of serving in their ranks and under their banners. The record of these forces is bright, but our enemies--old and new imperialism and world Zionism--concentrated against this record in a terrible manner because they wanted to make the nation doubt its shield and its sword. I had no doubt whatsoever that these Armed Forces were the victim but never the cause of the 1967 setback. [applause]

In 1967 these forces would have been able to fight with the same valor and courage with which they are fighting today had their military command not lost its nerve after the [Israeli] strike against which 'Abd an-Nasir had warned, or had the command not issued an order at that time for a general retreat from Sinai without 'Abd an-Nasir's knowledge as well. [applause] These forces were not given the chance to fight in defense of the nation, its honor and its soil. They were not defeated by the enemy but were exhausted by conditions, which did not give them a chance to fight. I took part with Jamal 'Abd an-Nasir in the rebuilding of the Armed Forces. Then destiny decreed that I should shoulder the responsibility of completing the rebuilding operation as well as of being their supreme commander.

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The Egyptian Armed Forces have achieved a miracle by any military standard. [applause] They have fully devoted themselves to their duty. They have efficiently absorbed all the weapons and methods of training of the modern age, as well as its sciences.

When I gave them the order to reply to the enemy's provocation and to check his deceit, they proved themselves. After the orders were given to them, these forces took the initiative, surprised the enemy and threw him off balance with the quick movement. I will not be exaggerating to say that military history will make a long pause to study and examine the operation carried out on 6 October 1973, when the Egyptian Armed Forces stormed the difficult barrier of the Suez Canal, which was armed with the fortified Bar-Lev Line, and to establish bridgeheads on the east bank of the canal after they had, as I said, thrown the enemy off balance in 6 hours.

The risk was great and the sacrifices were big. However, the results achieved in the first 6 hours of the battle in our war were huge. The arrogant enemy lost its equilibrium, even to this very moment. The wounded nation restored its honor. [prolonged applause]

The Middle East political map has changed. While we say so out of pride, as some of the pride is faith, we are dutybound to record from here, on behalf of the people and this nation, our absolute confidence in our Armed Forces [prolonged applause] our confidence in their command, which drew up the plan, [prolonged applause] our confidence in the officers and men who have implemented [the plan] with fire and blood. [prolonged applause]

We record our confidence in the Armed Forces' faith and knowledge, our confidence in the Armed Forces' arms and in their capability of using them.

I say in brief that this homeland can be assured and feel secured after fear that it now has a shield and a sword. [applause]

From here I want to draw your attention to the northern front, where the great Syrian army is fighting one of the most glorious battles of the Arab nation under the loyal and resolute command of brother President Hafiz al-Asad. [applause]

I want to tell our brothers on the northern front: You made a pledge and you were faithful to the pledge. You have made friendship and you have turned out to be the most honest friends. You have fought and you have proved to be the most courageous fighters. You have fought like men and stood fast like heroes. We could not have found more reassuring and praiseworthy men in this comradeship in which we had to fight together against a common enemy, the enemy of the whole Arab nation.

We have been the vanguards of the battle. Together we have borne its brunt and paid most expensively from our blood and resources. We will continue the fighting and defy danger. We will continue, backed by our brothers who have sincerely and faithfully joined the battle, to pay the price in sweat and blood until we reach an objective acceptable to us and to our nation in this serious stage of its continuous struggle.

That was about war, and now about peace. When we speak about peace we must remember and not forget--just as others also must not pretend to forget--the real reasons for our war. You will allow me to specifically and categorically state some of these reasons to you.

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1. We have fought for the sake of peace, the only peace that really deserves to be called peace--peace based on justice. Our enemy sometimes speaks about peace, but there is a vast difference between the peace of aggression and the peace of justice. David Ben-Gurion was the one who formulated for Israel the theory of imposing peace. Peace cannot be imposed. The talk about imposing peace means a threat to wage war or actually waging it.

The great mistake our enemy has made is that he thought the force of terror could guarantee security. But the futility of this theory has been proved in practice on the battlefield. It has been proved that if this theory did work at one time due to the weakness of the opposite side, it does not work if these people rally their forces every day.

I do not know how David Ben-Gurion would think if he were in command in Israel today. Would he have been able to understand the nature of history or would he be like the Israeli command today--in opposition to history?

Peace cannot be imposed. The peace of faits accomplis cannot exist and cannot last. There can only be peace through justice alone. Peace cannot be established through terror however oppressive and whatever illusions the arrogance of power or the stupidity of power might give. Our enemy has persisted in this arrogance and stupidity not only in the past 6 years, but throughout the past 25 years--that is, since the Zionist state usurped Palestine.

We might ask the Israeli leaders today: Where has the theory of Israeli security gone? They have tried to establish this theory once by violence and once by force in 25 years. It has been broken and destroyed.

Our military power today challenges their military power. [applause] They are now in a long protracted war. They are facing an attrition which we can tolerate more and better than they can. Their hinterland is exposed if they think they can frighten us by threatening the Arab hinterland.

I add, so they may hear in Israel: We are not advocates of annihilation, as they claim. [repeated twice]

Our Zafir type trans-Sinai [Abirat Sinai] Egyptian Arab rockets [Sawarikh] are now in their bases ready to be launched at the first signal to the deepest depth in Israel. [prolonged applause]

We could have given the signal and the order from the very first moment of the battle, particularly as the Israelis' haughtiness and vicious pride gave them the illusion that they could bear greater consequences than they really could sustain. But we are aware of the responsibility of using certain types of arms, and we restrain ourselves from using them. The Israelis should remember what I once said and still say: An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, and depth for depth. [prolonged applause]

2. We do not fight to attack the territory of others, but we fought and will continue to fight for two objectives: a) To restore our territory which was occupied in 1967, and b) to find ways and means to restore and obtain respect for the legitimate rights of the people of Palestine. [applause]

These are our objectives in accepting the risks of the fighting. We have accepted them in reply to unbearable provocations. We were not the first to begin these, but we acted in self-defense to defend our land and our right to freedom and life.

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Our war was not for aggression, but against aggression. In our war we did not depart from the values and laws of international society as stipulated in the UN Charter, which the free nations wrote with their blood after their victory over fascism and Nazism.

We may say that our war is a continuation of humanity's war against fascism and Nazism; for by its racist claims and its logic of expansion through brute force, Zionism is nothing but a feeble replica of fascism and Nazism which is contemptuous rather than frightening and calls for disdain more than for hatred.

In our war we have behaved in accordance with the provisions and spirit of the UN Charter, and not vice versa. In addition, we have behaved out of respect for the UN resolutions, both those of the General Assembly and of the Security Council.

Brothers and sisters: The entire world has supported our rights and praised our courage in defending these rights. The world has realized that we were not the first to attack, but that we immediately responded to the duty of self-defense. We are not against but are for the values and laws of the international community. We are not warmongers but seekers of peace. The world has realized all this, and in the light of it sympathizes with our cause. Today, the world sympathizes with us more out of its respect for our determination to defend this cause.

We were sure of world sympathy and now we are proud of its respect for us. I tell you in all sincerity and honesty that I prefer world-respect, even without sympathy, to world sympathy that is without respect. [applause] I thank you.

Brothers and sisters: A single state has differed with the whole world--not just with us, but with the whole world, as I said. This state is the United States. The United States claims it was shocked because we tried to repulse the aggression. We do not understand how or why the United States was shocked. This state, it said, was not only shocked but has recovered from the shock without coming to its senses.

It is regrettable and sad that this should be the stand of one of the two superpowers in this age. We were expecting or perhaps wishing, despite all the indications and experiences, that the United States would recover from the surprise and come to its senses. But this did not happen. We have seen the United States recovering from the surprise and turning toward maneuvers. Its first objective is to stop the fighting and the return to the lines that existed before 6 October. We could have been angered by this reverse logic, but we were not. This is because on the one hand, we are confident of ourselves, and on the other, we actually want to contribute to world peace.

The world is entering an era of detente between the two superpowers. Now we oppose the policy of detente. We had one reservation on this policy and this reservation still exists. If we want the world, after a world war has become impossible, to enter an era of peace, then peace is not an abstract or absolute meaning. Peace has one single meaning: That all the peoples of the world should feel that it is peace for them and not peace imposed on them. [applause]

I would like to say before you, and to all the world, that we want the policy of detent to succeed and to be consolidated. We are prepared to contribute to the success of this consolidation.

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But we rightly believe that this cannot happen while aggression is being committed against an entire Arab nation, which lies strategically in the heart of the world and possesses its most important economic resources. Any disregard for this logical fact is not only disregard but also an insult, which we do not accept, either for ourselves or for the world, which is aware of the importance and value of this area in which we live. Therefore, the world must realize now that this area can give and can withhold.

Brothers and sisters, the United States, after a maneuver we refused even to discuss, especially after we had forged the path of right with the force of arms, has resorted to a policy that neither we nor our Arab nation can keep silent about. It has established a quick bridge to transport military aid to Israel.

The United States was not content with the fact that it was its arms that enabled Israel to obstruct all attempts for a peaceful solution of the Middle East question. It has now involved itself in something with more serious and more dangerous consequences.

While we are fighting aggression and trying to remove its nightmare from over our occupied territories, the United States rushes to the aid of the aggressor to compensate him for his losses and to supply him with what he did not have before.

The United States has established a sea and air bridge along which new tanks, new airplanes, new guns, new rockets and new electronics [equipment] pour into Israel. We tell them: This will not frighten us. [applause] We tell them: This will not frighten us. But before matters reach the point of no return, you and we must understand: Where to, and for how long? Where to, when we and not Israel form the map of the Middle East? Where to, when your entire interests are with us and not with Israel? Where to, and for how long?

Brothers and sisters: I have thought of sending President Richard Nixon a letter in which I would clearly define our position. But I hesitated, lest this might be misinterpreted. For this reason I have decided instead to address an open message to him from here. [applause] This is a message not dictated by fear but by confidence. It is a message that does not emanate from weakness but from a genuine desire to protect peace and bolster detente. I wish to tell him clearly that our aim in the war is well known and there is no need for us to explain it again. If you want to know our demand for peace, then here is our peace plan:

1--We have fought and will fight to liberate our territories which the Israeli occupation seized in 1967 and to find a means to retrieve and secure respect for the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. In this respect, we maintain our commitment to the UN resolutions: The General Assembly and the Security Council [resolutions].

2--We are prepared to accept a cease-fire on the basis of the immediate withdrawal of the Israeli forces from all the occupied territories under international supervision to the pre-5 June 1967 lines.

3--We are prepared, as soon as the withdrawal from all these territories is completed, to attend an international peace conference at the United Nations, which I will try my best to persuade my comrades, the Arab leaders directly responsible for running our conflict with the enemy [to accept].

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I will also try my best to convince the Palestine people's representatives about this, so that they may participate with us and with the concert of states in laying down rules and regulations for a peace in the area based on respect for the legitimate rights of all the peoples of the area.

4--We are ready at this hour--indeed at this very moment--to begin clearing the Suez Canal and to open it for world navigation so that it may resume its role in serving world prosperity and welfare. I have actually issued an order to the head of the Suez Canal Authority to begin this operation on the day following the liberation of the eastern bank of the canal. The preliminary preparations for this operation have already begun. [applause]

5--In all this, we are not prepared to accept any ambiguous promises or elastic words which can be given all sorts of interpretations and only waste time in useless things and restore our cause to the state of inaction, which we no longer accept whatever the reasons the others may have or whatever sacrifices we have to make. What we want now is clarity: Clarity in aims and clarity in means.

Brothers and sisters: We have said our word. I pray to God Almighty that all will understand it within its true framework and will see it straight and will appraise matters rightly. The present hours demand the courage and the minds of men.

On our part we are facing these hours with the humility of those who are true to God, [applause] to themselves, to their nation and to mankind. The biggest battles ever fought with conventional weapons, even in the wars between the giants, are taking place during these hours. Destinies are being shaped and relations are being determined during these hours. The relations that are being determined will impose themselves on the future and are asserting themselves at present.

During these hours heroes are marching forward. During these hours martyrs are falling or rather rising up. Conflicting feelings are felt during these hours, hours during which the feelings of happiness are mixed with other deep feelings; This is because we wanted and still want right and not war. But we wanted and still want right even if war is imposed on us. When the elation of victory filled all the hearts, I--between myself and my God--was aware of all the suffering we are undergoing for the sake of victory. I have been following the news of our victory with humility because I know the truth. The dear Almighty has taught us: "You have been destined to fight although it is hateful to you." [Koranic verse]

Brothers and sisters, these are the moments in which we know ourselves, our friends and our foes. We have known ourselves. We have known our friends. They have been the most sincere and loyal friends we could ask for. We have always known our enemy. We do not wish to increase the number of our enemies; on the contrary, we have sent one message after another, one notification after another and one warning after another so as to give everyone an opportunity to make revisions [of their stands], hoping they will retreat. However we are, God willing, capable, after saying the word and giving notification and warning, of dealing one blow after another. We shall know when, where and how to do so if they want to escalate what they are doing now.

The entire Arab nation, on whose behalf I take the liberty to speak, has not forgotten the stands adopted during these hours. The Arab nation will not forget the friends of these hours who stand with it. It will not forget the enemies of these hours who stand with the enemy.



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God, be our support and guide. God, bless our people and our nation. God, you have promised and your promise is truth. If you support God he will support you and guide your steps. Peace be upon you. [applause]